

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING NOVEMBER 5, 2003

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *B Street & Brighton Street Housing Proposals – Update on November 3, 2003 (previously distributed)*
2. *Tax Impact – B and Brighton Street Developments*
3. *Pro-forma revenues/costs and schematic designs for B and Brighton Street Developments*
4. *Belmont High School Design Services to develop a Master Plan*

Members absent: D. Hobbs

Also present: Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Administrator Kleckner, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner, School Director of Finance and Administration Dr. Gerry Missal, Roger Colton from the Belmont Housing Authority, Co-Chair of the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on the Future Needs of Belmont High School Jennifer Fallon

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:37 PM.

Review of Special Town Meeting Articles

Housing Trust – Articles (#5, #6, #7, and #8)

Chairman Widmer asked the Committee for a Warrant Committee representative to the Belmont Housing Authority, since Pat Morley has left the Warrant Committee.

Mr. Colton from the Belmont Housing Authority spoke to the Warrant Committee regarding the Housing Trust Articles on the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

For B Street and Brighton Street, the Housing Trust is proposing to construct six units of housing (4 on B Street, 2 on Brighton Street). He spoke of creating two 7,000 square foot lots on B Street. Three of the four units would be “affordable” and one would be a “market rate” unit in order to subsidize the other units. The Town will get \$1.8 million of housing by donating this unused parcel of Town-owned land for B Street. The MacPhail Architectural Collaborative has been hired to create designs and models of the proposed homes. On Brighton Street, there is a proposal to bring in Habitat for Humanity creating a two-unit dwelling of “affordable” housing.

One of the reasons Mr. Colton believes Belmont should pursue this is a moral imperative to provide affordable housing, along with it being in Belmont’s own self interest to provide affordable housing. He cited Executive Order 418, which mandates creating a favorable atmosphere for affordable housing.

The second fiscal issue is the impact on the schools. There have been folks who have asked if building new housing would have an adverse impact on the schools. With the four new units of housing on B Street, the impact would be “none” according to Principal Bruce MacDonald. School Superintendent Dr. Peter Holland is sure the impact of schools with six housing units would be “minimal.”

The third fiscal issue is annual loss of tax revenues. Mr. Colton passed out and discussed a spreadsheet (*Handout 2*) on the tax impact on B and Brighton Street developments. It is a “minimal” tax loss of \$5,390 for Brighton Street and \$11,211 for B Street.

Lastly, there has been some impact about the impact of the Town Yard because there will be a “slice” taken off it to make the lots. DPW Director Peter Castanino has been involved in the process, and he said there would be no impact on the Town Yard with this development. The neighbors in the Brighton Street neighborhood object to a two-family dwelling because it is in a single-family zone. He is asking the Town to propose to place the two-unit house there as a “friendly 40B.” The vast majority of the neighbors would support a single-family Habitat for Humanity dwelling versus a two-family dwelling. Last night, Habitat said if they were told to build a single-unit dwelling, then they would walk away from the project. We may be able to put together some package of money (coming from the Housing Trust) that would convince them otherwise. All of the money is non-Town money, except for donating the parcels.

Chairman Widmer asked Selectman Brownsberger to update the Committee on their Monday night discussion for this topic. Selectman Brownsberger said while the Board of Selectmen did not take a vote, they did hear the neighbors concerns of this issue. Chairman Widmer then opened it up to the Committee for questions.

Member Brusch asked why not have Habitat build the homes on B Street and the architect design the Brighton Street house? It would go a long way in helping the Town’s image. One thing that is attractive about this idea is that Habitat would be involved. Mr. Colton answered that even if Habitat builds a single family home there, the MacPhail Architectural Collaborative will design it. The architect would like to donate her time.

Member Curtis asked who would have the economic risk on constructing those homes. Mr. Colton said there is currently an RFP out that deals with this. The economic risk would fall on the Housing Trust eventually, but either the Watertown or Waltham Community Development Corporations. Mr. Colton distributed the revenues/costs and schematic designs for the B and Brighton Street developments (*Handout 3*). Mr. Colton acknowledged that if Belmont does not go forward with this by January 1, then they would lose \$100K.

Member Tillotson mentioned we are soon to be out of compliance with Executive Order 418. What does the Town lose? Mr. Colton said it would be “discretionary dollars.” Town Accountant Hagg said the amounts of federal/state grants are very small currently, so the loss would not be much at all. Selectman Brownsberger said if we don’t take some steps to move forward on this issue, we are continuing a perception of Belmont being not

an open community. Member Tillotson is also concerned with the paths each perspective student would take: “standard” education, special education, and/or Minuteman Vocational schooling. Member Stratford answered the probability is not zero for having increased education costs. Dr. Missal said the school district does not need to worry about four additional housing units.

Member Callanan asked who provides the project oversight for this. Mr. Colton said there is no Planning Board issue, but the Housing Trust and the Office of Community Development that would be overseeing this.

Vice Chairman White asked what the opportunity cost is to the Town of deeding these lots without realizing revenue. An audience member added the Brighton Street lot appraisal came in at \$409K, if it’s clean. Mr. Colton pointed out it may not be clean because there was a petroleum spill about 17 years ago. The B Street lots would be \$450K in total, or \$225K per lot.

Mr. Colton said he was under the impression that even if the Town were to sell those lots, the Town would not use that money in its operating budget.

Member Oates asked what would stop someone from buying a \$100K lot and selling it for \$500K? Mr. Colton said there would be a deed restriction with a formula that would dictate the guidelines on selling, and it would remain affordable housing in perpetuity.

Mr. Colton asked the Warrant Committee to consider Selectman Mahoney’s request from Monday night to move forward with the affordable housing projects and seek to get the revenue out of the Woodfall Road property.

Chairman Widmer asked Mr. Colton if he would attend next week’s Warrant Committee meeting for further questions and follow up.

Member Bruschi asked for next week’s meeting if the Board of Selectmen could update the Warrant Committee on the Woodfall Road legal impediments.

High School – Article 2

Ms. Fallon reviewed their presentation (*Handout 4*) with the Committee. The project cost estimate for a High School renovation is \$40 million, taken from the 1999 ARCADD Facilities Audit. Ms. Fallon discussed possible alternatives to one comprehensive renovation and the need of professional services funds for the development of a master plan (*Handout 4 slides 6 and 7*). The reason why the School Department is coming with this now is the Energy Services Company (ESCO) project, which has a RFP due out this month. The High School is a major component of this project.

Selectman Brownsberger asked for the possible savings at the High School through the ESCO project. Ms. Fallon said that has not yet been determined. The ESCO puts the initial investment and uses a percentage of the savings as payback for their investment.

Dr. Missal said the potential savings would be \$40K-\$60K annual savings which would be shared with the ESCo until their costs are reimbursed. Then the annual savings would go completely back to the Town.

Member McCormick said the ESCo wants a relatively short period of time payback such as four to five years. Dr. Missal said we may be coming back to the Town asking for smaller projects within the 10 year period. Ms. Fallon cited one possible example the ESCo's may suggest is digital heating devices. That might be a capital cost the Town is not willing to go through because of the future High School building renovation structure.

Member Hofmann would asked where the \$90K come from to support this Article. He also wondered why the School Department isn't funding this request. Member Brusch answered up until recent history, the School Department has funded their feasibility studies. A few years ago, it was suggested that one use of the Kendall Insurance money is to use it as "seed money or planning money" for these kinds of projects. If Town Meeting decides that is a valid use of the Kendall Insurance funds, then that is where the money should come from. If not, then both this Article and the ESCo project should not go forward until proper funding is determined.

The Capital Budget Committee is meeting but not taking a vote on November 13th. Chairman Widmer said the Warrant Committee would vote on this topic the Monday night of Town Meeting.

Member Flewelling made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk